

past, how we kind of fenced with each other about these border problems that exist, whether it's people that come here illegally or whether it's the drug question.

But I can tell you from the bottom of my heart that we're getting superb cooperation. That isn't to say we don't have a ways to go. But we want to work with these people in that way. They're our friends. They're our future, in a sense, because we have an enormous potential market there and on below. And we're committed to the democracy that is sweeping most of South America.

So, I get very intense on this question because I really believe it is in our interest. And as people struggle to improve their societies, we ought to be in there helping. And it will help Mexico, but it will also help the United States.

So, on these technical questions that are of understandable concern to the labor unions or to the environmentalists, we un-

derstand their concerns, and Carla has done a superb job of answering those concerns.

Again, we need you. This is a team effort. It is not going to get done by the most able Trade Representative we have, by the President, by any individual member of the Cabinet. We've got to get this done by people like yourselves weighing in where you can with these Members of Congress. And I pledge to you that I will go the extra mile because I am absolutely certain it is in the best interest of this country we all love so much.

Thank you very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 2:49 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Trade Representative Carla A. Hills, Senator Lloyd Bentsen, Representatives Richard A. Gephardt and Dan Rostenkowski, and President Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico.

Remarks to Agriculture Groups and an Exchange With Reporters May 2, 1991

The President. Well, let me just say first, welcome to the White House. I want to take this opportunity with the Secretary here and leaders in American agriculture—and I use that term advisedly—here in the White House to publicly acknowledge the very positive response that we've received from key Members of the House and Senate on this legislation, this Fast Track question. I am confident that the growing support for Fast Track is evidence of a fundamental confidence, a confidence in our country that we can compete vigorously in the global economy.

And I want to take this opportunity to say we're approaching this in a nonpartisan manner. I am grateful to Senator Bentsen, the chairman of the Finance Committee, Congressman Rostenkowski, the head of the Ways and Means Committee, for their support and for their positive reception to our Fast Track action plan.

I also want to single out the majority lead-

er—I'm not trying to position him on this, but he went all the way down to Mexico in a spirit of honest inquiry to meet with President Salinas. We are trying to respond to the questions that he has appropriately raised, and he's committed to carefully review our plan, and I think that's good. I think that's the proper spirit and approach to this matter, and we are going to work very, very hard to expand markets, not just for agriculture but for the working men and women all across this country.

So, that was what I wanted to say. And now I want to hear from you all in just a minute after we are left alone. [*Laughter*]

Fast Track Legislation

Q. Are you going to win on the Fast Track vote?

The President. Yes, we're going to win. But we're not overconfident; we're not bragging about it. But we're going to work very, very hard. But we are in this to win.

It is vital to the United States, to the working people in this country. And it is also vital to our foreign policy objectives around the world, not simply in this hemisphere. It is fundamentally at stake—but also in Europe and Japan and everywhere else.

Middle East Peace Talks

Q. Are you going to send Secretary Baker back to the Middle East, Mr. President?

The President. Well, he's traveling a lot. [Laughter] I'll be talking to him this evening, but I don't have any—and there's no immediate plans, but that could change—

Q. Is there any merit—

The President. —that could change any minute. I am not pessimistic. I am determined that we are going to be the catalyst in that troubled corner of the world for peace. Problems there have been going on for years. But I had a long talk with the Secretary yesterday upon his return, and I'm not pessimistic. I realize there's some strong, big obstacles—put it that way. But I think everybody would agree that that area of the world is long overdue to have peace for it.

Thank you for—

Q. Is the window of opportunity closing up, you think?

The President. What's that?

Q. Is the window of opportunity closing up?

The President. Well, I don't think it's closing, but with this respect and credibility that we properly have in that part of the world, I think we're better positioned than we have been anytime in the last years to be this catalyst for peace. But I don't feel that time is running out in that sense, that we won't have any time after a week, or 2 weeks, or 3 weeks, or something of that nature. But one of the reasons Jim traveled as extensively—he did is to take the opportunity, based on the support we had in Israel and in these Arab countries, to try to bring them together.

Q. Well, what has happened? I mean, why the stalemate now?

The President. Because it's gone on for many, many years, Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International]. And you don't solve a problem of this complexity over-

night.

Q. No, but it seems to have been—

The President. But it's going—he's making some progress, and I wish I could share with you what it is. But when you're dealing in negotiations that are this sensitive, there are some things that are better kept on a quiet track. I'm just hopeful that we can build on the progress that's already been made.

Q. Well, does that mean bringing Jordan into contact with the Israelis—ready to meet—

The President. Well, we'll have to stay tuned to get the answer to that one. But, obviously, we want people talking to each other.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Powell

Q. Are you reading any books lately?

Q. Did Colin Powell disagree over the policy on the Gulf, that he was for containment and you were for action?

The President. How could we have disagreement when you see such a superb military operation—absolutely—it's just we were—here's my view on all this fascination with—what they're asking about is a new book that's trying to say who's up, who's down, who won, who didn't. [Laughter] For those who are not from Washington, let me tell you, we feed endlessly like piranha fish—[laughter]—this kind of information. And it's just—you know.

But as far as Colin Powell goes, he owes the Commander in Chief his advice. When the Commander in Chief makes a decision, he salutes and marches to the order of the Commander in Chief. If there's anybody that has the integrity and the honor to tell a President what he feels, it's Colin Powell. And if there's anybody that is disciplined enough, and enough of a leader to instill confidence in his troops, it's Colin Powell. So, it went very, very well. And the book that they're asking about has some things in it that are true, I'm sure, but I guess the only things that I've seen in it—called to my attention are those that aren't. So, I, in fairness, ought to read it, which I don't plan to do right away because I'm very busy. [Laughter]

But does that answer it, Charles [Charles Bierbauer, Cable News Network]?

Q. Well, not necessarily. If you say—

The President. Well, what have you got going? As you can see, these people are fascinated. I want to talk to them about Fast Track in agriculture—[laughter]—and you want to talk about a book that neither of us have read. [Laughter]

Q. If, as you say, he owes you advice, was his advice to continue with containment, whereas your decision was—

The President. Let history record that. I'm one that doesn't believe in trying to point out differences. The advice I get—if an adviser of mine, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State thought that every time they gave advice it was going to be advertised, I wouldn't get any advice.

People don't want to do that. And these people dealt frankly. And, of course, you're going to have some that think one thing is going to work. But nobody could have been more supportive, and nobody could have done his job better in every way than Colin Powell—whether it's giving advice to the President or whether it was saluting and marching to the orders of the President when we decided to go to war. And so—

Q. And that was—the decision was yours alone, then, wasn't it?

The President. Any decision of that nature is the decision of the President of the United States. Absolutely. And Colin couldn't have given me more sound advice along the way, and couldn't have been a better team player, and couldn't have been a more sterling military commander. And it was just a superb effort. And these little kind of nit-picking analysis after the fact—the American people will look at it, they'll be interested, but they're going to rejoice

in a clear victory, and they deserve to.

Thank you so much for your—[laughter].

Q. Did he call you up today to ask you—

The President. No, but I called him up today.

Q. And what happened?

The President. And I said, "If you have any angst, forget about it." [Laughter] And he said, "I don't." He said, "I have none at all." And that's typical of him. He's a generous and superb commander, and a great Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. And nobody's going to drive a wedge between him and me. I don't care what kind of book they've got, how many unnamed sources they have, how many quotes they put in the mouth of somebody when they weren't there. They are not going to divide us on this.

Q. How about Schwarzkopf?

The President. Never mind. [Laughter] Get out of here. [Laughter] You're history, Helen. Out of here. [Laughter] You talk about making command decisions? Out. [Laughter]

Note: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Agriculture Edward R. Madigan; Senator Lloyd Bentsen; Representative Dan Rostenkowski; Representative Richard A. Gephardt, House majority leader; President Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico; Secretary of State James A. Baker III; Gen. Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who was a subject of Bob Woodward's book "The Commanders"; and Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.